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Information Bulletin

Grade 6 English Language Arts
1994-95

This document was written primarily for:

Students	✓
Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	✓ Superintendents

This bulletin contains general information about the Achievement Testing Program and information specific to the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Additional copies of the bulletin may be made as needed.

DISTRIBUTION: Superintendents of Schools • School Principals and Teachers • The Alberta Teachers' Association • Alberta School Boards Association • Officials of Alberta Education • General Public upon Request.

October 1994

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General Information

The Achievement Testing Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special-needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*, which has been mailed to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts must be administered during the first week of June. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests must be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the test on the same day. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period, schools can ensure that most, if not all, absentees are tested. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

Beginning in 1995, the tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

French 6^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

French 9^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Students in French Language Programs

Beginning in June 1995, all students in Francophone and French Immersion programs must write the French form of the achievement tests. Alberta Education will send enrollment forms to schools by February requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-March.

Reporting the Results

Each school jurisdiction will receive a district report and school reports for their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staffs (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

Individual student profiles will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We also expect that these reports will be shared with parents.

Provincial results will be made public in September. A detailed *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report* is published annually.

Broadened Assessment Initiatives

The Student Evaluation Branch has developed additional instruments to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests themselves can provide. These instruments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis:

Grade 3

- 1995 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1996 •problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1998 •problem-solving activities in mathematics

Grade 6

- 1995 •problem-solving activities in mathematics

- 1996 •“whole book” performance-based assessment in language arts
- 1997 •problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1998 •performance tasks in science

Grade 9

- 1995 •problem-solving and decision-making activities in social studies
- 1996 •problem-solving activities in mathematics
- 1997 •performance tasks in science
- 1998 •performance tasks in language arts

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 6. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 6 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

These statements describe what is expected of Grade 6 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 6 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured. By comparing actual results to expected provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is in fact “good enough.”

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 6 English Language Arts should be able to deal with a familiar idea in writing, such as the narration of a personal

experience. On occasion, these students should be able to deal with complex and/or original thoughts. They are expected to produce work using clear words and expressions, and relevant, general details. They should be able to organize concrete, factual materials containing straightforward ideas. They are expected to recognize increasingly complex techniques of literary structure and organization, such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, and flashback.

It is expected that students meeting the *acceptable standard* are able to read relatively short, simple selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry, and to correctly identify the main idea, sequence of events, key details, author's purpose, and imagery used. These students should be somewhat able to associate meanings of specific words and expressions in context. It is expected that these students can analyze details and synthesize ideas in a familiar context. They should be able to consistently answer literal (idea, detail, and relationship) questions. Occasionally, they should be able to understand ideas, details, and relationships that are implied in a reading selection.

Standard of Excellence

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* are expected to confidently and competently deal with writing that requires complex and original thought. They should be able to develop and organize abstract, complex materials. It is expected that these students can consistently establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able not only to recognize complex techniques of literary structure and/or organization, but also to apply them to their own writing.

It is expected that students meeting the *standard of excellence* can effectively deal with abstract and complex details and ideas

found in longer, sophisticated selections of fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry. These students should be able to read, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. It is expected that they are able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of materials. Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to readily answer literal as well as implied idea, detail, and relationship questions.

Grade 6 English Language Arts Assessment

The assessment is composed of two parts:

Part A: Writing consists of one writing assignment designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is time for discussion, planning, drafting, and revising. Additional time of approximately 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading (multiple choice), is designed to be completed in 60 minutes. Additional time of approximately 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish. It consists of 50 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media. *Part B: Reading* has one booklet containing reading passages and questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use a dictionary and a thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

Part A: Writing

The *Part A: Writing* assignment consists of a picture and a prompt. Students are allowed to choose the format that will best fit their

approach to the assignment (narrative, letter, editorial, or diary/journal entries).

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* includes pages labelled Planning and Rough Draft, and Revised Copy. This format is designed to reflect the writing process model.

Although specific marks will not be given for planning and drafting, markers will be advised to take these elements into consideration when scoring student work,

especially in cases where students do not have ample time to complete a revised copy.

Important Information to Note!

Students will be given time to discuss the prompt with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about it, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Part A: Writing Blueprint

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Events and/or actions should be plausible and appropriate to the student's purpose. The student should be able to describe characters and setting using details that are appropriate for the context established.	The writing assignment follows a picture and a writing prompt that will be read aloud to students. The assignment allows the student to select the format that would best fit his/her approach to the prompt.	The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements: Meets the standard of excellence Approaches the standard of excellence Clearly meets the acceptable standard Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard Clearly below the acceptable standard INS insufficient
Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.		
Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve the student's purpose.		
Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.		

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Beginning in June 1995, classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using the scoring guide in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally will be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading.

Discrepancies will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual student results can be reported.

All papers will be marked in Edmonton in July. Group leaders will meet before the marking session. Markers will be Grade 6 teachers selected from those whom superintendents have recommended as markers to the Student Evaluation Branch. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 6 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking.

The branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 150 Grade 6 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. Markers will be contacted in May. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process in which some teachers who are selected for marking are asked to make judgements about the achievement test to answer the question of whether province-wide performance is good enough. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Achievement Testing Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Achievement Testing Program*.

Sample Writing Assignment

The sample assignment that follows is similar in format and content to the assignment on the 1995 Grade 6 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* component. Adequate space for planning, drafting, and revised work will be provided in the writing booklet. This sample assignment is for classroom use.

Grade 6 Achievement Test

English Language Arts

Part A: Writing

To the Teacher

Please read the information on this page to the students.

Description

- In this test, you are asked to look at a picture and write from a prompt.
- You have 10 minutes for discussion, 10 minutes for planning, and 1 hour and 40 minutes to complete your writing.

Instructions

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates about the writing assignment or to think alone about it.
- You will have an additional 10 minutes to do your planning on your own.
- You may use an English language dictionary and a thesaurus.
- Write your ideas on the pages labelled ***Planning and Rough Draft***.
- Write your revised work in **blue** or **black ink** on the pages labelled ***Revised Work***.
- Remember that you may make changes and corrections to your revised work.

Evaluation

- Your writing will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content**, **Organization**, **Sentence Structure**, **Vocabulary**, and **Conventions**).

Sample Writing Assignment (continued)

After your teacher has read the following writing prompt, use your imagination to write about what happens next. Choose the writing format (narrative, letter, diary/journal entries) that will allow you to do your best writing.

April

1995

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 My Birthday!
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

It was Saturday morning. My birthday had finally arrived. Mom and Dad had hinted that I would get an extra special present. My grandparents had already given me a *Sega* for Christmas, so I had no idea what was in store for me.

I was bubbling with excitement. Little did I know what that present would mean to me!

In your writing:

- Consider** your audience
- Focus** on the purpose of your writing
- Organize** your writing appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- Budget** your time
- Proofread** and correct your revised work.

Reporting Category: Content

When marking **Content** appropriate for Grade Level 6 writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- develops a relationship between events and/or actions and his/her established context
- uses specific detail
- considers the reader

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained. • The events and/or actions are consistently appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are specific and consistently effective. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest and may be lively and/or imaginative.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established and generally sustained. • The events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are specific and generally effective. • The writing engages and generally holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained. • The majority of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are general and may be predictable but are appropriate. • The writing generally holds the reader's attention.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and may not be sustained. • Some of the events and/or actions are appropriate for the context established by the writer. • Supporting details are few and/or may be repetitive. • The writing does not hold the reader's interest.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose may be unclear; if a purpose is stated or implied, it is not sustained. • There are few events and/or actions. • Supporting details are scant. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Reporting Category: Organization

When marking **Organization** appropriate for Grade Level 6 writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- introduces the topic/subject
- follows a coherent order
- establishes connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters
- brings closure to the writing

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction captures the reader's attention, clearly establishes events, character, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are consistently maintained. • The ending ties events and/or actions together.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction clearly establishes events, characters, and/or setting, and provides direction for the writing. • Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are maintained. • The ending provides an appropriate finish for events and/or actions.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction directly presents information about events, characters, and/or setting. • Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter from time to time. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are generally maintained. • The ending is predictable and/or contrived, but is connected to events and/or actions.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction provides little information. • Arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are unclear, and/or inconsistent or missing. • The ending is predictable and/or contrived, and may not be connected to events and/or actions.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may be confusing. • The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent. • Connections and/or relationships between events, actions, details, and/or characters are missing. • The ending, if present, is unconnected to the events and/or actions.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Sentence Structure

When marking **Sentence Structure** appropriate for Grade Level 6 writing, the marker should consider

- the degree to which the writer frames grammatically correct sentences
- the effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length

Meets the Standard of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is consistently controlled.• Sentence type and length are effective and varied.
5	
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is controlled.• Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied.
4	
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sentence structure is generally controlled.• Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, may occasionally impede meaning.
3	
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control of sentence structure is sometimes lacking.• There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, often impede meaning.
2	
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control of sentence structure is generally lacking.• Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, severely impede meaning.
1	
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Vocabulary

When marking **Vocabulary** appropriate for Grade Level 6 writing, the marker should consider

- the specificity of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- the accuracy and effectiveness of the words and expressions selected by the writer

Meets the Standard of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific words and expressions are carefully selected.• Words are used accurately and deliberately to fulfill the purpose.
5	
Approaches the Standard of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection.• Words are used accurately and often effectively.
4	
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words would have been more effective.• Words are generally used accurately.
3	
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General rather than specific words predominate.• Specific words, if present, are frequently misused.
2	
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General words that convey only vague meanings are used.
1	
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Reporting Category: Conventions

When marking **Conventions** appropriate for Grade Level 6 writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics/grammar (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, agreement of subject-verb, pronoun-antecedent, pronoun reference)

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing is essentially free from errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.Proportion of error to length and complexity of the response must be considered.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing has few errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.Proportion of error to length and complexity of the response must be considered.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing has occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.Proportion of error to length and complexity of the response must be considered.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, many of which reduce the clarity of the communication.Proportion of error to length and complexity of the response must be considered.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing has numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that are both noticeable and jarring; they severely reduce the clarity of the communication.Proportion of error to length and complexity of the response must be considered.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 50 machine-scorable questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media.

The reading blueprint on page 14 shows the distribution of the sample questions on the following pages. These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1995 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different.

Development

Reading selections were chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.

- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 6 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 6 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions related to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

Blueprint for Sample Reading Questions

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to recognize explicit and inferred or implicit relationships among settings, events, characters, and ideas, and identify growth or change in fictional characters.		4	1	11
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre and elements of story structure, recognize the author's techniques, and determine the author's purpose, as well as use text and typographical features to assist reading.		5, 7	2	22
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of the more common types of figurative language.	1, 2	9	3	33.5
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from the entire reading selection.		3, 6, 8	3	33.5
Total Number of Questions	2	7	9	100
Percent of Test	22	78	100	100

Sample Reading Questions

I. Read the information below and answer questions 1 and 2.

from SPRING CLEANUP AT LEGOLAND

Workers toting brushes and buckets of soapy water tower like giants over brightly colored buildings. You can hear the scratching of bristles scrubbing and the whoosh of water spraying. There's a bustle in the air. It's spring cleanup time at Legoland park.

Legoland is a theme park in the town of Billund, in Denmark. In Legoland park, visitors find exact, pint-sized copies of real and imaginary European towns. They take safaris through a land teeming with wildlife. They gaze up with awe at "Mount Rushmore" which looks down on a Wild West town. It all takes up an area the size of 19 football fields. And it's all made of plastic Lego building blocks.

Readyng the place for season opening on May 1 is a big job. Some 34 million blocks make up Legoland park. It takes 50 people a full month to wash all the models and to install the smaller ones that have been stored for winter. The workers drain and refill canals and seaports. Gardeners landscape the grounds and prune tiny trees and shrubs.

Exposed constantly to the weather, the colors of the models fade after four or five years. Every year, worn out models are rebuilt or replaced with new ones.

New models are built in the park's design studio. There, 20 people work full time constructing new buildings and figures for the park. There's no shortage of possibilities. Just six Lego blocks of the same color can be combined 102 981 50 different ways!

Designers work from sketches and plans to build a scale model of snapped-together Lego blocks. Then they build the final model to the desired size. This time the blocks are glued into place. Glue protects the model from being torn apart by wind, rain, and ice.

Lego blocks came about because of the Great Depression, or economic slump, of the 1930's. A Billund carpenter, Ole Kirk Christensen, turned to toy making when he could no longer find work building homes. Only one of his toys really took off, but one was enough. Today, Lego blocks are sold in 115 countries. The Lego group estimates that children in Europe alone play with Lego toys a total of five *billion* hours a year.

Legoland park opened in 1968 to solve a problem at Billund's Lego factory: So many people wanted to tour the place that they were interfering with the work. Next year, nearly a million tourists will visit Legoland park.

National Geographic World Magazine

1. “Workers . . . tower like giants” (line 1) indicates that the workers are
 - A. standing on a tall building
 - B. surrounded by curious children
 - C. big compared to the small buildings
 - D. big compared to the people of Legoland

2. The word “bustle” (line 3) refers to a
 - A. cool mist
 - B. freshness
 - C. harsh sound
 - D. flurry of activity

II. Read the poem below and answer questions 3 and 4.

THE NORTH WIND

Once, when I was young I knew the wind.
I called “Wi-ind, North Wi-ind”
And it came,
tramping the grass so that it lay flat,
5 And whinnied high and shrill like a whistle.
I saddled it with imagination,
and bridled it with dreams.

And I got on and we went, and the trees
bowed down in our passing.
10 I was exhilarated with the speed
and lay down on his neck to keep
balance.
And his snowy mane whipped about my face.
His unshod hoofs made no sound
15 as he trod on the stars.
His breath made icicles on the houses
we passed
And then he bucked.

Joanne Lysyk

3. As a young child, the poet thinks of the North Wind as a

- A. guide
- B. friend
- C. magician
- D. destroyer

4. The “trees bowed down” (lines 8–9) suggests that the

- A. trees were very old
- B. wind was very strong
- C. wind was exciting
- D. trees were heavy with icicles

III. Read the story below and answer questions 5 and 6.

from **COWBOYS DON'T CRY**

Shane's horse, Angel, has been caught on an old barbed wire fence. He and Casey are able to cut her loose.

I saw Angel's body heaving upward above me. I rolled away from the scrambling hoofs.

I opened my eyes a second later. Angel was on her feet, snorting and shaking. Casey was on the ground with mud all over her but she was still holding onto the halter rope.

5 She didn't move as I got up and eased over to Angel. "I've got her," I said, and Casey let go of the rope and slowly stood up.

Casey walked slowly around Angel. "The back leg's bad. I'd better get my mother." "Your mother?"

10 "Yeah. She's a vet. Our place is next to yours and her clinic's there. Try and lead the horse down to the barn where there's some light. We'll meet you there."

Every step seemed like forever. I didn't think Angel would make it down to the barn. And I wasn't sure I wanted her to. The way that leg was dragging, I was afraid she was walking to a mercy-killing.

The lights were on in the barn and a van was parked outside.

15 Casey's mom hardly noticed me as she started sweet-talking Angel, running her hands over her neck and shoulders, gradually working her way back to the hind leg.

"Bring that light over here so I can get a good look, Casey," she ordered.

20 Casey shone the light right on the wound and I got a good look, too. I also just about got sick. Through the shredded flesh was oozing blood, the light caught the dull white gleam of bone. I turned away and leaned my face against Angel's neck, wishing I was dead.

Mrs. Sutherland sighed. "Well, there's a chance."

25 She gave Angel a couple of needles that calmed her down a lot. Then she went to work, cleaning, cutting, and sewing. She did the surface cuts first. She just put some kind of salve on most of them but she put a couple of stitches in Angel's chest.

Then, she started on the leg. She probed around in the cut for a while. Then she looked up. "Well, you can thank God the tendons aren't cut. If they were gone . . ." She didn't need to finish the sentence.

30 She worked on the leg for a long time. Finally, she wrapped the whole joint in some kind of stretchy bandage and straightened up slowly, as if her back hurt. "That's about it. Now all we can do is wait and see."

"Will she get better?" I asked. I must have sounded about six years old, but I couldn't help it.

Mrs. Sutherland smiled, a tired, sad kind of a smile that made me think she'd been

Continued

35 asked that question a lot of times and that the answers had never been easy. “No promises, kid—but I’ve seen some pretty hopeless cases fool the experts.”

I guess I must have looked about six right then, too, because suddenly, she put her arm around me and gave me a big hug. I’d never been hugged by a vet before but it sure felt good. “Don’t give up on her yet. She’s got good stuff in her.”

Marilyn Halverson

5. The line that indicates what prompted Mrs. Sutherland to comfort Shane is

- A. “I was afraid she was walking to a mercy-killing” (lines 12–13)
- B. “I . . . leaned my face against Angel’s neck, wishing I was dead” (lines 20–21)
- C. “I must have sounded about six years old” (line 32)
- D. “I guess I must have looked about six right then” (line 37)

6. “I’ve seen some pretty hopeless cases fool the experts” (line 36) suggests that

- A. another vet should look at Angel
- B. Angel still has a chance to recover
- C. vets are not usually right
- D. Angel is a weak horse

IV. Read the play below and answer questions 7 and 8.

from **CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY**

The Television-Chocolate Testing Room. It is completely bare except for a large television camera at one end, a large television screen at the other, and several bright floodlights. All enter as scene opens.

WILLY WONKA: (*Hopping up and down with excitement*) Here we go! This is the Testing Room for my very latest and greatest invention—Television Chocolate!

MIKE TEAVEE: But *what* is Television Chocolate?

WILLY WONKA: Good heavens, child, stop interrupting me! It works by television. I 5 don't like television myself. I suppose it's all right in small doses. They want to sit there all day long . . . staring at the screen—

MIKE TEAVEE: That's me!

WILLY WONKA: The very first time I saw ordinary television working, I was struck by 10 a tremendous idea. If a photograph could be broken up into millions of pieces, and the pieces sent whizzing through the air until they hit an antenna, and then put together again on a screen—why couldn't I send a *real* bar of chocolate whizzing through the air in tiny pieces, and then put the pieces together at the other end, all ready to be eaten?

MIKE TEAVEE: Impossible!

15 WILLY WONKA: Think so? Watch me send a bar of chocolate from one end of this room to the other—by television. Bring me that chocolate bar, please. (CHARLIE brings over an enormous bar of chocolate from offstage) It has to be big, because whenever you send something by television, it always comes out much smaller than it was when it went in. Here we go then! Get ready!

20 (MIKE wanders curiously toward the camera) No! No! Stop! You there! Mike Teavee! Stand back! You're too close! There are dangerous rays coming out of that thing! They could break you up into a million tiny pieces in one second! (MIKE backs away) That's better! Now then, switch on! (*Lights flash and bar disappears through slit in curtain*)

25 GRANDPA JOE: (*Waving his arms and shouting*) The chocolate's gone!!

WILLY WONKA: It's on its way! It's now rushing through the air above our heads in a million tiny pieces. *Quick!* Come over here! (*All dash over to the other side of the stage, to TV screen*) Watch the screen! (*Small bar of chocolate appears through slit in curtain and lighted screen*) Take it!

30 MIKE TEAVEE: (*Laughing*) How can you take it? It's just a picture on a television screen! (CHARLIE reaches out and the chocolate miraculously goes into his hands)

GRANDPA JOE: It's absolutely fantastic! It's . . . it's . . . it's a miracle!

WILLY WONKA: Just *imagine*—when I start using this across country, a commercial will flash onto the screen and a voice will say, "Eat Wonka's Chocolates! They're the best in the world! If you don't believe us, try one for yourself . . . now!!!!"

GRANDPA JOE: Terrific!

Roald Dahl

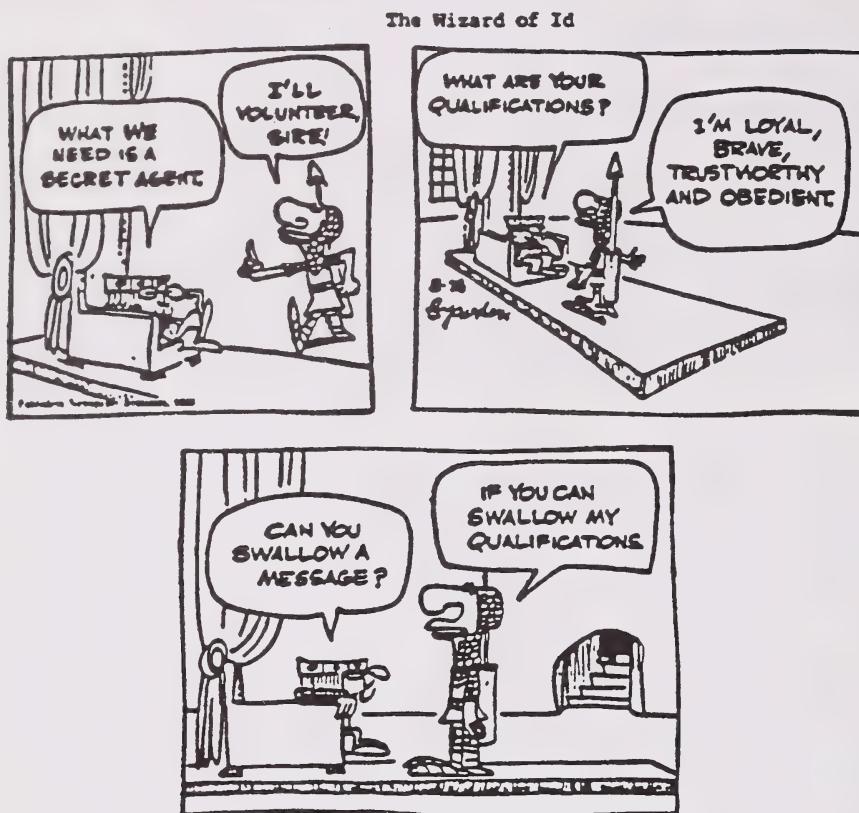
7. The words in the brackets

- A. add more detail to the story
- B. tell what the actors should be doing
- C. highlight certain parts of the story
- D. help the actors understand the script

8. Willy Wonka created this experiment **mainly** to

- A. transport his chocolates
- B. show the powers of TV
- C. advertise his chocolates
- D. show what a good inventor he was

V. Consider the cartoon below and answer question 9.



by permission of *Johnny Hart and NAS, Inc.*

9. The word “swallow” as used by the knight means

- A. eat
- B. believe
- C. determine
- D. understand

Key and Descriptors for Sample Reading Questions

Question	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard	Examples of Assessment Standard*
1	C	Informational	Associating Meaning	identify the connotation of words beyond their literal meaning	A
2	D	Informational	Associating Meaning	identify the meaning of a word from its context in a passage	E
3	B	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information in a passage	A
4	B	Narrative/poetic	Main Ideas/Details	focus on key details in a passage	A
5	D	Narrative/poetic	Organization of Ideas	recognize a cause/effect relationship	E
6	B	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information in a passage	E
7	B	Narrative/poetic	Organization of Ideas	use print details to assist in comprehension	A
8	C	Narrative/poetic	Synthesizing Ideas	draw conclusions by synthesizing information in a passage	A
9	B	Narrative/poetic	Associating Meaning	identify the connotation of words beyond their literal meaning	E

*A—Students meeting the acceptable standard should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

E—In addition to answering the questions identified for the acceptable standard, students meeting the standard of excellence should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified.

Part B: Reading Grade 6 Language Arts Achievement Test, June 1995

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to recognize explicit and inferred or implicit relationships among settings, events, characters, and ideas, and identify growth or change in fictional characters.	2	8	10	20
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to identify genre and elements of story structure, recognize the author's techniques, and determine the author's purpose, as well as use text and typographical features to assist reading.	2	8	10	20
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of the more common types of figurative language.	4	10	14	28
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from the entire reading selection.	4	12	16	32
Total Number of Questions	12	38	50	100
Percent of Test	24	76	100	100

Suggestions for Students

We hope that teachers will share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

I strongly advocate preparing children to understand tests and testing through extensive class discussion about the makeup of the test and how to take it, and then adequate practice to find out their own particular weaknesses in approaching tests.

—Graves, p. 183

Have students do the sample questions included in this bulletin. Then have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1989 and 1993, the Student Evaluation Branch published documents entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses given on the 1988 and 1992 Language Arts achievement tests. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guide that is in this bulletin. Students can be taught to use the guide when evaluating their own writing as well as that of peers.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Plan their available time carefully. We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. They will have two hours to complete the assignment.

Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignment asks them to do. The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignment is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignment helps them to focus on what is expected.

Plan their writing using the pages provided. Choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try:

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

Use their reference materials. They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. Use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about. Ensure that they spell words correctly by looking them up. Use a thesaurus carefully. It can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing. Be careful not to overuse a thesaurus.

Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing:

- awareness of audience
(appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft. Double space if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material using the strategy that works best for them:

- a. Read the selection and think carefully about it before they try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection; or
- b. Read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer.

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

Make sure they consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but in visual form such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

Take the time to re-read the lines that are referred to in a question. Many questions contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to re-read the lines that are referenced and consider the meanings of these lines in their immediate context in the selection and in the context of the selection as a whole.

When answering “best answer” questions, be sure to read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will always include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

Credits

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Donald H. Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1991), p. 183.

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